

WISCONSIN



MAIN STREET

Wisconsin Main Street Case Study Organization

Merge News Magazine Green Bay – On Broadway

Merge is On Broadway, Inc.'s (OBI) 8 ½' x 11", 16-page, full-color newsmagazine. The focus of the publication is to persuade a wider audience to shop, eat, live, work and network in the Broadway District and downtown Green Bay area. To accomplish this goal, every issue contains articles relating to those five topics. This newsmagazine replaced a standard organizational newsletter to turn an organizational expense into income; to help consumers better understand how to use the downtown and Broadway District; and, to help the businesses promote themselves.

Like many non-profits, OBI was facing funding issues going into 2004. The organization made a commitment to turn significant expenses into income-generating projects. *The Revue*, OBI's newsletter was at the top of the list, costing the organization nearly \$10,000. The Marketing Committee took on the task, and the "Red to Black" meetings began. Recognizing that an obvious source of income would be through the sale of advertisements, the committee knew that it had to develop a premiere publication to attract advertisers. Through the hard work and dedication of volunteers, low-cost resources were secured, and the 16-page glossy was born. Partnerships were formed with students from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay to do layout and graphic design. Indeed, the deficit was turned into a profit.



Merge is the most significant communication tool between OBI and its stakeholders as it educates volunteers, donors, and others about the progress of the organization. The publication also shows the public what the Broadway District has to offer. Often woven into the articles are historical pieces or pure entertainment sections. And, a calendar of events is a regular feature. Ninety percent of the Broadway District businesses are small and have been unable to afford advertising in major publications. *Merge* is designed to be a low-cost alternative for small businesses. Special discount rates are given to businesses in the Broadway District. Businesses also gain extra exposure and credibility by writing an occasional article themselves as "experts in their field." OBI direct mails the publication to 1,200 people. Another 1,800 copies are placed in target-market areas like hotels. *Merge* is also published on the web and is e-mailed, too.

The response to *Merge* has been phenomenal. The mailing list grows after the publication of each issue and advertising is increasing, too. The publication has been highly praised by the public, volunteers, and businesses.